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THE DEVELOPMENT OF KOREA IN MOST RECENT TIMES

By George Trumbull Ladd, LL.D., Professor in Yale University

The expectations and plans of Marquis Ito with regard to the economic and social regeneration of Korea, as he emphasized them anew in my last interview with him, have been in part fulfilled, but also in part disappointed. In the morning of the day on which he was to set out for a return to Seoul from Tokyo, where he had been spending some time in reporting to the emperor and arranging Korean affairs with the home government, his secretary telephoned me to meet him at the hotel where he was staying. On reaching the hotel, I was shown into a barely furnished smoking-room and left alone until the marquis could be free from the other engagements which were necessary to complete his official preparation for departure. After this had been done, Ito came unaccompanied into the room and we were alone together for an hour, during which he talked about his work as President-general of Korea, with his customary earnestness and frankness. "There," said he pointing across the small round table to the receptacle in which he was depositing the ashes of his cigar, "is a poor, ignorant wretched, misgoverned human being, the average Korean common man. I want to get at him and do him good. I want to lift him economically, and give him the benefit of just laws, education, and opportunities for social betterment. My way to reach him"—drawing a line with his finger toward the ash-tray—"is along this path. I am the only one in all the world who can do this work in this way." "The missionaries," he went on to say, pointing sideways, "are over there. They want to get at and do good to the same poor, wretched human being. But their way is not the same as my way. They must not come across here and get in my way"—still illustrating with his finger.

"I have no desire to go across there and get in their way. On the contrary, I wish them every success."

The marquis then went on to say that he was still as firmly and unalterably opposed to annexation as ever. He thought it would be a bad thing both for Japan and for Korea. As long as he had his emperor with him, he would never consent.

Even then it was the opinion of some of the staunchest friends and most devoted supporters of Marquis Ito that the government as organized and administered under a protectorate could never solve the difficult and complicated problems involved in the economic and political relations of the two countries, to the full satisfaction of either. This opinion was more than once confidentially expressed to me by Mr. D. W. Stevens, than whom the marquis had no more loyal supporter and faithful, affectionate friend. Among the reasons for this conviction that the protectorate was doomed in the end to terminate in annexation, if Korea was to be really redeemed and the menace with which it threatened Japan finally overcome, the following were among the chief. No ministry composed of Koreans could possibly be formed and kept in power, that could be trusted to keep its own membership free from conspirators to commit assassination and to stir up revolt. While I was there, the minister of education, who was most effusive in his commendation of my advice to the Koreans to make themselves strong in industry and righteousness, was convicted of contributing a goodly sum of money to pay for the assassination of his own countrymen who were his colleagues in the Korean ministry. It was, moreover, utterly impossible to free the Korean courts of justice of the established and time-honored practice of deciding the cases brought before them, not according to law or equity, but according to the size of the bribe put into their itching palms, or according to the social or political influence of the contestants. But most obvious of all, was the difficulty, not to say the impossibility, of controlling the wily old emperor in the matters of his squandering the state lands, and the public moneys, and granting all manner of absurd and ruinous concessions

to native and to foreign seekers for spoils, and to the court scoundrels, female as well as male, that had access to his private ear, or could play upon his avarice, his fears, his hatred of the Japanese; and could persuade him that they somehow had influence with some foreign government, that might possibly eventuate in some kind of foreign intervention.

During my visit to Pyeng-Yang, as I have told the story, in my book *In Korea with Marquis Ito*, one of the many lies propagated by the editor of the *Seoul Daily News*, and his American and Russian coadjutors, came perilously near exciting a bloody revolt among the ignorant native population there. It was reported that Korea was immediately to be taken forcible possession of, and its emperor carried off to Japan, if not at once put to death. It is not strange, then, if the initiation and first years of actual annexation were accompanied by very considerable disorders and attempts at more serious revolution. The murders of the Hon. D. W. Stevens and of Prince Ito fixed their memories as among the greatest and best friends that Korea ever had, or ever will have; while it paved the way for the justifiable measure of the control of Korean affairs by complete annexation.

The first years after annexation were, as was naturally and even inevitably to be expected, characterized by more or less severe disorders and threatenings of disorder. But these were dealt with firmly, and on the whole wisely and skillfully, by the quasi-military policy of General Terauchi. Even since 1910 there has been a constant diminution of active disagreement on the part of the native population. The number of plotters of mischief and their influence began soon notably to fall off; the attitude of the missionaries became more conciliatory; and the plans of the promoters in their endeavor to make good the concessions of the old emperor, many of which were so plainly contrary to public justice and public welfare, have been less bold and scandalous. And during the last half decade of years, the *jingo* native papers, and the hostile foreign papers, have been able to rake up so little of even mildly sensational

matter that they have scarcely been worth the reading in matters of this concernment. It may be unhesitatingly affirmed that, so far as present indications give evidence, Japan has already established in Korea a thoroughly good government, and has set the country on the highway to educational and social betterment and to well established economic prosperity.

For thorough students of statistics in affairs of this nature, and for those capable of analyzing such material, the proper proof of the statements which I have just made, would be found in the volume entitled *Annual Report on Reforms and Progress in Chosen (Korea) as Compiled by Government-General of Chosen*. But the reading of such material would be dry enough; and the last volume of this Report—it always being a whole year behind the current year—would bring the statistics down only to July, of a year ago. But I shall quote a few of the more important facts in proof of my contention that the government of Korea as a part of the Japanese empire has been a great success; and I will add the statement that all the news reaching me through newspapers and magazines since the period covered by the full official report confirms and illustrates the same opinion.

Perhaps the most interesting and significant item of the report deals with the census and tabulates the growth of population in the successive years since 1910, and the distribution of this growth between Koreans and Japanese. By a dispatch issued by the civil governor, August 7, 1915, marriage was recognized between Korean women and Japanese men, and between Japanese women and Korean men. But the registration of concubines as members of a family hitherto practised among the Koreans, was prohibited. The table below gives the census returns.

DATE	JAPANESE	KOREANS	FOREIGNERS	TOTAL
1910	171,543	13,128,780	12,694	13,313,017
1911	210,689	13,832,376	12,804	14,055,869
1912	243,729	14,566,783	16,589	14,827,101
1913	271,591	15,169,923	17,349	15,458,863
1914	291,217	15,620,720	18,125	15,929,962
1915	303,659	15,957,630	17,100	16,278,389

This table is a complete refutation of the fear that the Japanese were going to inundate Korea, when they got full possession of it, and submerge the native population and take from them the land. It confirms my prediction, made as early as 1907, that the net increase of the Japanese immigration would not much exceed 20,000 annually; and that the native Koreans, when given a fair chance, are much too vigorous a race to be overwhelmed, in any such way. Indeed the number of Japanese remaining in Korea for the last year or two has been considerably below the number predicted, and the process of amalgamation is beginning to go on so rapidly that the prospect is, a hundred years from now, the average inhabitant of Chosen will not know whether his great grandparents were Koreans or Japanese, or a mixture of the two. And since the ranking prince of Chosen, the son of the old emperor by his concubine, Lady Om, is to marry into the imperial family of Japan, the prospect is equally good that long before that date Chosen will be as devotedly loyal to the Japanese Empire as any part of its territory.

The improvement in the finances as reported in this official pamphlet is most encouraging. Under the protectorate the total revenues, including several million *yen* advanced by the Japanese government without interest, amounted only to *yen* 23,000,000 a year on the average, and scarcely covered the state expenses; while in addition to military expenditure, *yen* 14,700,000 was defrayed by Japan for the maintenance of railways, posts, telegraphs, telephones, law courts, and the expenses of the residency-general. But this subsidy of the Japanese government has been reduced to *yen* 7,000,000 in the budget for the fiscal year 1916, while the total revenue has swelled to *yen* 59,848,998; and this annual subsidy will disappear entirely from the budget of the fiscal year 1918, when fiscal independence of the peninsula will be established. Meantime, the burden of taxation has been greatly lightened and fairly distributed.

At the beginning of the protectorate in 1907 the foreign trade of Korea was insignificant; the exports amounted only to *yen* 8,000,000 while the imports were two or three times

as much. Since the annexation, and the economic improvement which it made possible, the export trade has grown rapidly, so that in 1916 it amounted to *yen* 56,108,000. Since 1915 the so-called "unfavorable balance of trade" has become less and less significant. While the entire foreign trade of Chosen, during the last eleven years, has increased three times, the exports have increased six times and the imports somewhat over two times.

Under the auspices of the Government-General an industrial competitive exhibition was held at Keijo (Seoul) in the autumn of 1915. It continued open for fifty-one days, from September 11 to October 31, and the total number of visitors registered amounted to 1,164,387, or an average of 22,531 per day. It was "an eye-opener," not only for foreigners, but also, and especially, for the Koreans themselves. Great pains were taken to make clear the notable advance in the quantity and quality of the chief agricultural products, such as rice, beans, barley, the increase in the growth of cotton, from 11,000,000 to 45,000,000 *Kin*; of mineral products from *yen* 6,967,000 to *yen* 10,515,000 in value; of marine products, from *yen* 8,140,000 to *yen* 13,234,000 in value; and the output of factories from *yen* 19,000,000 to *yen* 45,914,000. During the past six years, it was made known that more than 250,000,000 trees had been planted for purposes of afforestation.

As to civic and judicial matters I quote from the Report.

The legal status of Koreans is much the same as that of Japanese, the more so as the Japanese civil and commercial law was made applicable to Japanese and Koreans alike, as a general principle in 1912; while certain exceptions in the law of persons have been made for Koreans so as to give them the benefit of their own peculiar usages.

In most cases where natives of one country are by force incorporated into another nation, the question of the use of the two languages is apt to become a burning question. The course of the Japanese government in Korea is fully explained in the following passage quoted from the Report.

The spread of Japanese, or the new national language, among the Koreans has been so remarkable that students in common schools after two years study can not only understand lessons

given in Japanese, but freely talk in it, and text-books used in high schools are now all written in Japanese with the exception of reading books for the Chinese and Korean languages; and students of the higher professional schools can take notes of the lectures in Japanese. The educational authorities are of course making serious efforts for the spread of the new national language among the Koreans. Since the new educational system came into force in 1911 the Japanese language has been made an obligatory subject in the curriculum of government and public schools. Private schools maintained by Christian missions and others have not been slow in adopting it as a regular subject of study; and the new private school regulations enforced in 1914 require all private schools to teach the Japanese language as a required course. In addition, over 400 public common schools are now holding night schools for the national language, while the gendarmerie and police and other bodies have organized more than 2,000 new national language associations. Not only are Koreans natural linguists, but the construction of the Korean language is very similar to that of the Japanese, in neither of which is the verb reflexive, as in European and the Chinese languages. Furthermore, the present economic influence encourages the Koreans to acquire the Japanese language, as Japanese in Korea occupy the position of employers of Koreans in many cases.

With regard to another subject which is often fraught with a heavy load of jealousy, is the distribution of the official positions between the two races; or in other words the amount of self-government, or participation in the government, allotted to Japanese and Koreans respectively. As might be expected, Japanese are principally employed in the most responsible places or positions requiring technical knowledge, while Koreans are for the most part employed as assistants or subordinates. Yet all the members of the central council, five provincial governors out of thirteen, all the provincial councillors, all district magistrates, and all village head men, are appointed exclusively from the native population. The number of government officials paid out of the government revenues in the fiscal year 1916 was 38,166, of which 17,230 were natives. The report significantly adds:

Though the Japanese officials and employees outnumber the natives at present, with the educational growth of the Koreans, government positions in the future will be filled by natives much more freely than has hitherto been the case.

On the whole, and especially since the Koreans themselves seem to be well satisfied with the change of government, we do not see how the mead of praise can be withheld from imperial Japan, for giving to the world a notable example of a really "benevolent assimilation."